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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### USDA ANNOUNCES SIGN-UP FOR 2006 CONSERVATION SECURITY PROGRAM

*LAKEWOOD, CO* - Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns recently announced the 2006 Conservation Security Program (CSP) sign-up will be held Feb. 13, 2006 to March 31, 2006, in 60 watersheds nationwide. CSP is managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and landowners within Colorado's Middle South Platte-Sterling watershed are eligible for enrollment and are encouraged to visit with their local Field office or the following site: <http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CSP/CSP2006/CSP2006.html> for additional information.

*"NRCS is committed to providing a fair and equitable program that rewards Colorado's leading conservationists"* states Allen Green, NRCS State Conservationist, Colorado. *"Although we were anticipating two watershed enrollment areas for this sign-up period, we're confident that we are meeting the intent and goals of the program to reward the best and motivate the rest."* Final watershed selections were based on top priority areas and available funding.

To be eligible for this Colorado 2006 CSP enrollment period, most of a producer's agricultural operation must fall within the boundaries of the selected watershed. Those landowners are then encouraged to complete the CSP self-assessment which further assists in eligibility determination. The self-assessment may be downloaded from the previously mentioned website or obtained from a local NRCS Field office.

Participants of the program will be enrolled in one of three tiers in the program, depending on the extent of the conservation treatment in place on their farm or ranch. Payments will be based in part on this existing conservation treatment, as well as their willingness to undertake additional environmental enhancements.

*"Although this is the third CSP sign up, the program continues to evolve and build on it's original intent which is to provide financial reward and incentives for long term land stewardship,"* Green goes on to say. *"The 2006 program will favor landowners that enroll their entire operation and those with a history of comprehensive conservation efforts."*

As of 2006, the privately-owned land currently enrolled in CSP covers nearly 11 million acres in 220 watersheds in all 50 states and the Caribbean Area. CSP is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. The program will be available annually on a rotational basis in as many watersheds as funding allows. Additional information about CSP is available from your local USDA Service Center or at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp>.

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